

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 24, 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Meeting: June 22, 1959 -- 11:32 a.m. to 11:58 a.m.
The President, Gov. LeRoy Collins of Florida, Gov. George D. Clyde of Utah, Gov. Luther Hodges of North Carolina, Gov. John E. Davis of North Dakota, Gov. Stephen McNichols of Colorado, Gov. Robert Meyner of New Jersey, Gov. Robert E. Smylie of Idaho, Gov. William G. Stratton of Illinois, Gov. Cecil H. Underwood of West Virginia, Mr. Kenneth Holland, Dr. John E. Ivey, Jr., Mr. Brevard Cribfield, Mr. John Perry, General Persons, and Mr. Merriam.



The President received members of the Executive Committee of the Governors' Conference prior to their departure for a three-week visit to Russia. The President commented on the basic friendliness of the Russian people and told of the great curiosity which they had about America and Americans. He also related some of the details of a dinner which Stalin gave for him at the Kremlin.

Governor Collins asked the President if he had any advice to give to the Governors. In response the President said that he would always politely explain the American position on any subject, but that he carefully avoided getting into any arguments. He urged the Governors to ask any questions they felt like when talking with the Russians, but in elaborating on his advice not to argue, he told of one time he and Marshal Zhukov had gotten into an argument in which Zhukov finally said, "Well, your democracy appeals to everything that is selfish in man."

The President in commenting on the Geneva Conference said, of course, our basic position was we assumed the responsibility to protect the rights of two million free Germans in East Berlin and that we were going to stay with it unless in the context of settling the general situation there could be some agreement on the status of Berlin. He noted that the size of our forces in Berlin was a negotiable subject, but only if there was a will to have a settlement. The President commented that of course the Russians were once again testing out our firmness.

Governor Meyner asked the President if he thought Khrushchev wanted to come to this country. The President said that he didn't know about this, but that his impression was that Khrushchev wanted to make it clear to everybody that he is the one that decides things in the Soviet Union. The President then went on to say that we can't throw out diplomatic channels, and that if Khrushchev wants action he can always instruct others to let this be known. The President then asked the rhetorical question of why there should be a summit conference if we know in advance there would be negative results.

In answer to the question as to whether a summit conference might be held in the United States, the President indicated that he had given Secretary Herter carte blanche to determine the location and timing of the summit if there was to be one.


Robert E. Merriam